(b) The recommendations of the Law Commission have been considered and the Government has agreed in principle to set up an Armed Forces Tribunal for hearing appeals against orders of Court Martials and for adjudication of service matters of Armed Forces personnel. A Bill seeking to set up the Tribunal is being finalised.

(c) Establishment of a Tribunal does not bar the writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

Steps to prevent another Kargil like situation

329. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item under the caption 'Pak preparing for another Kargil? New Militant outfit being formed' which was published in the "News Times" dated the 17th June, 2000;

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) whether Government would take any concrete steps to prevent another Kargil like conflict this year and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) All appropriate measures have been taken to thwart Pak designs. Our troops are well equipped, prepared and motivated to meet any eventuality.

POWs in Pak Jails

330. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 54 of our defence officers and men are rotting in Pakistan jails for the past 28 years;

(b) whether the issue of release of POWs was discussed during the recent visit of the group from the Human Rights Commission from Pakistan;

(c) if so, what have been the outcome thereof; and

(d) what positive steps are being taken to see that the POWs are returned to India at the earliest possible?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d)

According to representations received from the family members of the missing defence personnel including representations from Missing Defence Personnel Relatives Association, there are 54 Indian defence personnel in the custody of Pakistani authorities as prisoners of war. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which is the nodal Ministry on this issue, has been taking up this matter on several occasions with Pakistan at various levels, including that of the Prime Minister. During his visit to Pakistan from 20-21 February, 1999, Prime Minister raised this issue with the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the two sides appointed a 2-member Committee at Ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues, including that of the missing personnel. The matter was also raised in the official level discussion held with Pakistan on March 5-6, 1999. The Pakistani side stated that there were no Indian POW's in its custody, but agreed to re-examine the matter afresh. The Government would continue to purposefully pursue this matter with Pakistan.

No delegation of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan visited India recently. However, chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan visited India as leader of a women's delegation.

All the missing defence personnel of 1965 and 1971 wars, after a lapse of 7 years, have been presumed to be killed and their families are given liberalised pensionary awards, which include liberalised family pension, gratuity, children allowance and education allowance for children.

Modernisation of Naval, Air and Armed Forces of the country

331. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to strengthen and modernise Naval, Air and Armed Forces of the country;

(b) whether this is felt necessary after Kargil war;

(c) if so, the funds earmarked therefor; and

(d) the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) The strengthening of the country's Defence is a continuous process. The requirements of our Armed Forces are reviewed on a continuing basis for induction of modernized weapons and weapon systems and keeping in view threat perceptions and the prevailing strategic/security environment as also emerging technologies. Most of the weapons purchased post Kargil were based